

Images Are What You Make Of Them (Part 2 of 3)

A Reprint of the September 1997 Edition

August 21, 1997. My godmother died this morning. It's a strange sentence with which to start a column on inappropriate fantasy but it's what came out of my fingertips.

I had not seen her for some time but remember her fondly for the type of woman she was—hard working, loving, gentle, a lover of humor, and a good laugh. She was the kind of woman who made me feel welcomed whenever I did visit. I can't visit her again except in my mind, and I'm sad that I let so many times pass when I could have enjoyed her company.

For me to remember Aunt Betty is to step into a rainbow of positive emotions and occasions. To recall the kind of fantasy that fueled my sexual desires and the abuse that followed is to step into an evil place filled with hurt and lies.

As a youngster growing up with an interest in books, I used to hang around the library shelves where fantasy and science fiction books were stored. It was a place where imagination was set free to ride a rocket as easily as wearing the medieval uniform of a knight in shining armor. It was an escape from the serious business of growing up. Most of all, it was not reality but then no one ever said it was.

Puberty brought new meaning to the word "fantasy," a step, some said, toward manhood. For most of my friends at the time, I guess that manhood was defined as a desire for a woman, a proving ground for sexual prowess. For some like myself, confused and still not having found a natural bonding with other males, those fantasies were actually distortions of legitimate feelings and needs.

A third category would include those of you reading this who have molested—myself included. Regardless of the gender focus of our fantasies, there was an inability to relate to the adult world. Children of varying ages from infants to teens filtered into our fantasy lives with alarming frequency. Just as most fantasy ultimately leads to some behavioral response, our fantasies made possible the impossible for most of the world—the sexual exploitation of the young.

Fantasy could be defined as thought patterns which appear to be directed at others but in reality are self-serving, often dangerously ignorant of another's dignity or rights as an individual. Because fantasy is based on the unreal, a person acting on his or her fantasies will never see them fulfilled. There will always be yet another level to be reached, a level that is always a step beyond, and all too often a deeper, darker level.

For some of us, fantasy is the reconstruction of ourselves without the flaws that separate us from our own definition of perfection. We look at another and say to ourselves, "If only I had his good looks, his muscle, his engaging personality, his seeming control, then I could be happy." The rebuilding begins simply enough, but the project is never completed. There is always a mirror which reminds us of the difference.

I once heard Leanne Payne (author of *The Broken Image*) say that given time, the fantasized person we build can become almost real, a person who walks alongside us.

There is, I think, a desire for those of us who molested to somehow connect with the child in ourselves that remembers the "good" times, the times before life got confusing and frightening. The age level of our victims often corresponds with a critical time frame in our own lives.

Ironically, many who molest imagine the "beauty" of their victim's coming into sexual awareness in their presence (the lie of inappropriate fantasy) while forgetting the pain and sexual confusion they themselves experienced—some while being molested as young children (the reality of inappropriate fantasy). I think that perhaps they subconsciously are trying to make right what was so wrong.

John F. Harvey writes in *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*, "One breaks the spell of fantasy by reaching out in love to people in the *real* world. (p.144)" He is not saying that we are to lose ourselves in others, but to see others without the imagined trappings. Contrary to Satan's lie, children (or other adults for that matter) are NOT just waiting for the opportunity to become sexual with us.

All sexual fantasy is not evil but by definition deals in the unreal. People are real. If a sexual relationship is to be as God designed it, then both parties must learn to put aside whatever hinders the foundation of love in that relationship. Both parties must have equal say in that relationship, a quality that is impossible between an adult and a child.

For he beguiles himself with the thought that his guilt will not be found out or hated (Psalm 36.3) Can I speak to others what is in the secrecy of my mind? Do my thoughts seek to improve BOTH me and the person I consider?

The other week I shared in a group that it seemed to me incredible that the same God who was never absent regardless of the grossly inappropriate, terrible things I did, thought or said could still love me with such constancy. His presence was not a sign of agreement with my choices, but a constant reminder that He wanted more for me. Little by little, I am learning to accept those good images of me, and I am healing.

I cannot write that all fantasies have disappeared because they have not. I can write that those fantasies are now almost exclusively connected with the past and not the future, like dust which returns and needs to be wiped off a piece of fine furniture.

Because Aunt Betty was real, my memories of her will always bring a smile to my heart. I wish you could have met her. Isn't that something we hope others will say of us?

Broken Yoke Ministries is a not for profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and operates *solely* on the contributions of people such as you. All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us. *Unused stamps* are also very welcomed and a good way for those in confinement to be in partnership with this ministry. The bottom line is that we need YOU to help make these newsletters possible. So pray about becoming a partner with this ministry.